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PROGRAMME MATTERS

Summary of UNEP Highlights of the Biennium 1994-1995

Note by the Executive Director

In accordance with Governing Council decision 17/37 of 21 May 1993, the Executive Director has the honour to submit herewith, for the information of the Governing Council at its nineteenth session, a brief summary of activities for the biennium 1994-1995. The publication entitled UNEP Highlights of the Biennium 1994-1995 provides a detailed and comprehensive overview of results. That report was issued in December 1995 and has been widely distributed.

The report differs from previous annual reports of the Executive Director in that it covers a biennium rather than a single year.

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Highlights of the Biennium 1994-1995

Summary

1. For UNEP, the 1994-1995 biennium was a transitional one. The organization has moved from a sectoral programme of work to one which provides a more integrated response. It has moved away from activity-reporting to the reporting of results.

2. For the biennium 1994-1995, the UNEP programme of work was structured according to the following principles: a management strategy focused on achieving results that satisfy needs, providing responsive services to the Governments and peoples of the world, forging partnerships with others who offer added value to the organization's own efforts, effective regional delivery, and better programme integration.

3. A brief summary of the key activities of the 13 subprogrammes of the 1994-1995 programme of work is presented below. A more comprehensive report, UNEP Highlights of the Biennium 1994-1995, is available from the secretariat.

A. Atmosphere

4. UNEP continued to contribute to the implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, including co-sponsorship with World Meteorological Organization (WMO) of the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and coordination of a set of country case-studies under the World Climate Impact Assessment and Response Strategies Programme.

B. Freshwater Resources

5. UNEP intensified its innovative, catalytic role in promoting the environmentally-sustainable management and use of freshwater resources, particularly for transboundary watersheds, UNEP initiated diagnostic studies as part of its Environmentally-Sound Management of Inland Waters (EMINWA), published 10 scientific and technical books dealing with various aspects of the aquatic environment, and chaired the Water Working Group of the Secretary-General's Special Initiative for Africa.

C. Terrestrial Ecosystems

6. With respect to biodiversity, UNEP has implemented its Biodiversity Programme and Implementation Strategy (BPIS) in support of the Convention on Biological Diversity and, in cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), has supported three successful projects. UNEP participated, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in the preparation of a forest policy and strategy paper and a review of the Forests Principles, three years after United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). UNEP also continued its efforts on biodiversity conservation through its work with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, FAO, and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). With regard to desertification control, UNEP played a significant role in the development, in June 1994, of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa

and its desertification control subprogramme has been brought into line with the Convention.

D. Oceans and Coastal Areas

7. UNEP played a significant role in the adoption of the Action Plan for the Protection of the Coastal and Marine Environment of the North-West Pacific region, the creation of the thirteenth regional seas programme in the South-West Atlantic region and the adoption of the South-Asian Seas Action Plan. Considerable work also continued to be done within the context of the Living Marine Resources Programme. UNEP played a key role in the adoption of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and was designated, in December 1995, to perform the secretariat function for the Global Programme of Action.

E. Health, Human Settlements and Welfare

8. UNEP, with its many partners, continued to promote a clearer understanding of the linkages between environment and health. Examples include: the preparation of an assessment of the possible health effects of climate change, the development of publications related to integrated pest management (Beyond Silent Spring and Integrated Pest Management in the Tropics), the Sustainable Cities Programme, and the establishment of a joint UNEP/Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) Environment Unit.

F. Environmental Economics

9. UNEP initiated an action programme on the environment and economics in order to develop further and apply environmental economic tools for integrating environmental considerations into development planning and decision-making; to promote understanding of the implications of environmental standards, policies and agreements; and to promote complementarity between international environmental agreements and trade agreements.

G. Environmental Law

10. A major and continuing task has been the further development of environmental law under the Montevideo II Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law for the 1990s. Over 30 countries received technical assistance with the review, development or implementation of their environmental legislation and institutions. UNEP enhanced countries' environmental-law capacity through the UNEP/United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Global Training Course on Environmental Law and Policy, played a significant role in the conclusion of the Lusaka Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora and embarked on preparations for the development of an international legally-binding instrument for applying the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure to certain hazardous chemicals in international trade.

H. Toxic Chemicals and Waste

11. UNEP advanced significantly, with FAO, the PIC programme, expanding the number of participating countries to 140, adding to the list of chemicals that are part of the procedure and promoting Government-to-Government information exchange on chemicals. With regard to persistent organic pollutants (POPs), UNEP has initiated the assessment process and established a working group aimed at producing an action plan to deal with POPs.

I. Industry and Energy

12. UNEP, through the organization of training events, publications, demonstration projects, operation of clearing-houses, and provision of financial and technical support, the increased awareness and enhanced capacity for cleaner production; increased information exchange for technology transfer; increased the number of countries with developed accident-prevention and emergency-response programmes; enhanced knowledge of environmental management and pollution control in various industrial sectors; enhanced responsible entrepreneurship and improved environmental management practices; and promoted the implementation of the Montreal Protocol through the OzonAction Programme.

J. Earthwatch

13. UNEP restructured its assessment subprogramme during the 1994-1995 biennium to place the emphasis on integration of the various programme components - Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS), Global Resource Information Database (GRID), and Environment and Natural Resources Information Networking (ENRIN) - and on regionalization. The International Environment Information System (INFOTERRA) responded to 80,000 queries during the biennium. UNEP has signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), linking INFOTERRA with the UNDP Sustainable Development Network Programme (SDNP). A partnership with IUCN was also established.

K. Capacity-Building

14. UNEP conducted 12 training courses in integrated environmental management, in which more than 300 officials from all over the world participated. UNEP promoted regional training networks in Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, West Asia and Africa. In conjunction with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the newsletter Connect was distributed to 20,000 addressees in eight languages. Nearly 40 grants were awarded in all six UNEP regions to qualifying projects under the UNEP Small Windows Projects in Environmental Education and Environmental Training.

L. Regional Cooperation

15. A major upgrading of the UNEP regional presence was undertaken through specific management action in the following areas: upgrading regional director reporting relationships; new regional director core functions; a new management strategy; regional emphasis in the programme of work and future programmes of work; and steps to improve the credibility and effectiveness of

regional offices. UNEP Highlights of the Biennium 1994-1995 reviews the activities of each of the UNEP six regions.

M. The core subprogramme (inter-agency affairs, information and public awareness, resource mobilization for environmental action and conference services)

16. UNEP undertook a number of initiatives to streamline and improve its coordinating role both within the United Nations system and with international financial institutions. The first meeting of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group (IAEG) was held in late 1994. With the approval of IAEG, UNEP began the development of a system-wide strategy in the field of the environment. During the biennium, UNEP also established a focal point on gender issues and a Gender Issues Board and played an active role in the preparations for and activities related to the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Conference).

17. Among its many information and public-awareness efforts, UNEP published 10 issues of Our Planet; issued 140 press releases and 40 audio-visual kits and films with Television Trust for the Environment (TVE); supported the communications activities of all the UNEP programme areas; organized World Environment Day celebrations in London in 1994 and Pretoria in 1995; and played a key role in the International Children's Conference on the Environment.

18. During the biennium, the Clearing-house for Technical Cooperation mobilized resources additional to the UNEP Environment Fund to provide technical assistance to developing countries. Resources for eight projects given priority by developing countries were mobilized or brokered. An additional eight developing countries received technical assistance under an umbrella project funded by the Governments of Germany, Finland and Sweden.

19. Lastly, as regards conference services, several innovations were implemented, including the use of remote translation, reduction in the paper load for the Governing Council and other meetings, and the use of recycled paper.

N. New Developments

20. During the biennium, there were also a number of new developments in UNEP including operationalization of the International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC) offices at Osaka and Shiga, Japan; conclusion of an agreement with the European Space Agency to initiate the Mercure project; and establishment of a Corporate Planning and Accountability Service (CPAS).

O. International Environmental Conventions

21. Extensive work under each of the environmental conventions was undertaken during the biennium. For details of the progress made under each of the conventions, UNEP Highlights of the Biennium 1994-1995 may be consulted.

P. Global Environment Facility (GEF)

22. During the biennium, UNEP played an active role in the negotiations to restructure the GEF. It re-established the role of UNEP in the Facility and built upon its programme of activities to contribute to the GEF mandate to promote cooperation among developed and developing countries in addressing global issues in the focal areas of climate change, ozone depletion, biological diversity, international waters and land degradation.

Q. Funds and administration

23. The total financial contributions to UNEP for the biennium 1994-1995 stood at US$ 234 million, excluding the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, and at US$ 485 million if the Multilateral Fund is taken into account. On 31 December 1995, there were 428 Professional posts approved (371 occupied) and 593 General Service posts approved (532 occupied).